

What Did Joseph Smith Say About Zion?

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, commonly referred to as the Mormon Church, had her beginning in the Spring of 1820. Joseph Smith, Jr., was at this time a boy of 14 years of age. He claims that at this time he received a vision of God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son. They told him, according to his story, that all of the Christian Churches were wrong and that he was to restore the true Church to the earth. This eventually led to the founding of the Mormon Church on April 6, 1830.

Since that time, Joseph Smith and the succeeding leaders of the Mormon Church claim that they are God's prophet on the earth today. One of the prophets of the Mormon Church, Brigham Young, made the following statement. He said, "Take up the Bible, compare the religion of the Latter-day Saints with it, and see if it will stand the test." (Discourses of Brigham Young, by Widtsoe, p.126). We intend to do that by examining Joseph Smith's prophecy about Jackson County, Missouri and what the Bible says about a True Prophet.



Let us begin with the Bible. What did God say in the Bible about testing a prophet? In Deuteronomy 13:1-4, He said, "If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, (2) And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spoke unto thee, saying, let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them, (3) Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet,

or that dreamer of dreams; for the Lord your God testeth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. (4) Ye shall walk after the Lord your God, and fear Him, and keep His commandments, and obey His voice, and you shall serve Him, and cleave unto Him."

The question is rightly asked, How will we know when the Lord has truly spoken or when He has not? We find an answer in Deut. 18:21-22, "And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath spoken? (22) When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously; thou shalt not be afraid of him."

In our examination, we are not questioning whether God can give a revelation in the 20th Century. We are faced more with the question of WHEN and WHERE has God spoken, not IF He can do such. He has used such men as Martin Luther, John Calvin, Huldreich Zwingli, John Wesley, Charles Spurgeon and D. L. Moody to bring reform and revival in the Christian Church. Our question again is, Did God use Joseph Smith as a prophet? In the Scripture we have already looked at we find that a True Prophet of God will not lead us after any other God than the God of the Bible and what ever the Lord has spoken through His prophet will always come to pass. It will not fail in one point.

In September, 1832, Joseph Smith gave the following prophecy of Zion, which was to be established in Jackson County, Missouri. This prophecy can be found in Doctrine and Covenants 84:1-5 and verse 31. "A revelation of Jesus Christ unto his servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and six elders, as they united their hearts and lifted their voices on high. (2) Yea, the word of the Lord concerning his church, established in the last days for the restoration of his people, as he has spoken by the mouth of his prophets and for the gathering of his saints to stand upon Mount Zion, which shall be the city of New Jerusalem. (3) Which city shall be built, beginning at the temple lot, which is appointed by the finger of the Lord, in the

western boundaries of the State of Missouri, and dedicated by the hand of Joseph Smith, Jun., and others with whom the Lord was well pleased. (4) Verily this is the word of the Lord, that the city of New Jerusalem shall be built by the gathering of the saints, beginning at this place of the temple, which temple shall be reared in this generation. (5) for verily this generation shall not all pass away until an house shall be built unto the Lord, and a cloud shall rest upon it, which cloud shall be even the glory of the Lord, which shall fill the house....which house shall be built unto the Lord in this generation upon the consecrated spot as I have appointed-."

In August of 1833, Joseph Smith added to the above prophecy, which is recorded in D & C 97:19, "And the nations of the earth shall honor her, and shall say: Surely Zion is the city of our God, and surely Zion cannot fall, neither be moved out of her place, for God is there, and the hand of the Lord is there;."

Four months later, in D & C 101:17-21, Joseph Smith also said, "Zion shall not be moved out of her place,...they that remain...shall return...to build up the waste places of Zion-...And, behold, there is none other place appointed than that which I have appointed; neither shall there be any other place appointed than that which I have appointed, for the work of the gathering of my saints-."

Zion was NEVER established in Jackson County, Missouri. The temple was NEVER built at the place appointed by the Lord in the generation of Joseph Smith. The question is brought up by some Latter-day Saints concerning the word "generation", and whether it really meant the generation of 1832 who heard the prophecy. Some have gone to the measure of pointing to the New Testament Greek term for generation, which can mean a 40 year generation, a race of people, or a group of people. The problem with this kind of reasoning is that we are not dealing with 1st Century Greek, we are dealing with 19th Century English, which does not allow for the diversity in meaning. This becomes very apparent when we read the writings of some of the First Presidency and Apostles of the Mormon Church. They all believed that the 1832 generation which heard the prophecy would see Zion established in Jackson County, Missouri. Here are some actual quotes:

God has been with us from the time that we came to this land, and I hope that the days of our tribulation are past. I hope this, because God promised in the year 1832 that we should, before the generation then living had passed away, return and build up the City of Zion in Jackson County; that we should return and build up the temple of the Most High where we formerly laid the corner stone.

They are holy places, and they will be held sacred even as Jackson County:

Joseph the Prophet dedicated that land, and they feel the effects of that dedication; and the blessing will remain there, and all hell cannot get it off; and I shall yet see the day that I will go back there, with brother Brigham and with thousands and millions of others, and we will go precisely according to the dedication of the Prophet of the living God.

We believe in these promises as much as we believe in any promise ever uttered by the mouth of Jehovah. The Latter-day Saints just as much expect to receive a fulfillment of that promise during the generation that was in existence in 1832 as they expect that the sun will rise and set to-morrow. Why? Because God cannot lie. He will fulfil all His promises. He has spoken, it must come to pass. This is our faith.

Orson Pratt
Jour. of Dis. 13:362

Heber C. Kimball
Jour. of Dis. 6:190

Orson Pratt
Jour. of Dis. 13:362

The Mormons were removed from Jackson County, Missouri. In 1834 Joseph Smith gave another prophecy about Jackson County. This can be found in History of the Church, Vol. 5:393-394. It says, "...I prophesy in the name of the Lord God of Israel, unless the United States redress the wrongs committed upon the Saints in the state of Missouri and punish the crimes committed by her that in a few years the government will be utterly overthrown and wasted, and there will not be so much as a potsherd left..."

Although we do not endorse the persecutions the Mormons went through, the fact still remains that the government did NOT redress the wrongs, nor did they punish for the crimes. Furthermore, the government was not overthrown and wasted, as this prophecy said would be. All of the prophecies surrounding Zion, or Jackson County, Missouri failed. The 1832 generation died without building a temple at "the appointed place". Zion was not established in Jackson County. Many other parts of these prophecies failed to come to pass. Remember that the Bible said if a "prophet" fails in ONE POINT, then he was not sent by God and we are not to obey him. The obvious conclusion is that Joseph Smith gave false prophecies and therefore should not be followed. Instead, we should follow our Apostle and High Priest of the Christian Faith, Jesus Christ (Heb. 3:1). Faith in our living Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is the requirement for Eternal Life (1 Jn. 5:13, Rom. 10:9, & Eph. 2:8).

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